

Statement by Lithuania at the 205 session of the Executive Board

9 October 2018

Mr President,

Madam Director-General,

Madam President of the General Conference,

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the EU statement.

Lithuania welcomes and supports the efforts of the Director General to **improve the functioning and efficiency of UNESCO**. We support the alignment of our discussions on Strategic transformation with the issues of ongoing reform of the United Nations.

UNESCO finds itself at the forefront of meeting the existing challenges in promoting sustainable development and preventing violent extremism. The idea of education as premising a sustainable future is solidly enshrined in SDG4 of the 2030 Agenda, where education is not limited to its primary and secondary levels but also includes fostering possibilities for lifelong learning. Even in Europe, public efforts in terms of investment in education have been identified as one of the factors accounting for differences in economic development at the regional level. Much is still to be achieved and we count on UNESCO's leadership and convening power.

We appreciate the goal to **engage UNESCO more actively in the international fora** and to open Organization more widely to civil society. We support the direction of making our Organisation more visible and recognize with appreciation innovative formats, such as recent Partners Forum and Initiative for Mosul.

For decades, UNESCO has been committed to the core values of freedom and democracy through the promotion and protection of **human rights**, especially the freedom of expression, strengthening the rule of law and consistently supporting civil society.

We welcome the active engagement of UNESCO in promotion freedom of the media and expression online and offline, as well as ensuring the **safety of journalists, including in conflict situations**.

Even though the legal framework for the safety of journalists has evolved over the last decade, full implementation of international norms remains challenging, especially when addressing the threats faced by local and women journalists. Therefore, Lithuania encourages all States to reinforce the implementation of legal norms and provisions for the safety of journalists, including the accountability gap.

We welcome the New Strategic Framework of the UNESCO IPDC Programme. “IPDC talks” is very successful outcome of the IPDC programme, and Lithuania is committed to continue supporting this conference, which focuses on access to information and promotion of media pluralism. This event allows to make a forceful statement on the liberating power of information and its contributions to attaining the sustainable development goals. Objective information, just like education, is an invaluable source of critical thinking, the sphere in which the international community continues to count on UNESCO’s crucial efforts.

We believe that these areas will remain high on the agenda of UNESCO, the UN agency with a specific mandate to promote freedom of expression.

Recognizing that UNESCO takes the leading role globally promoting media and information literacy, in a couple of weeks, on October 24-25, Lithuania will host the feature conference of Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) week. We hope that the upcoming conference will contribute to achieving common goals, including

fighting against misinformation, fake news and propaganda; fostering intercultural and religious dialogue; transforming the learning process, better city governance.

Lithuania supports UNESCO in advancing **gender equality**, as well as the **empowerment of women and girls**. Women's empowerment and their enhanced role in all spheres of society is particularly important for sustaining long lasting stability and development of the country. Inherently, these are efforts aimed at the prosperity of our own generation and of those to come. Lithuania appreciates and strongly supports UNESCO's Sectors advancing gender equality in their programme activities.

Mr. President,

UNESCO *modus operandi* from its inception and for decades was based on a unique balance between intergovernmental character of this organization and a crucial role of **independent experts**. In this time of transformation, it is fundamental to recognize the necessity to preserve this balance and to protect the space and the role, given to experts in all sectors of UNESCO activities. We hope this issue will get its deserved attention during the discussions at this Executive Board.